

Student Teaching: An Inside Perspective

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Purpose of Thesis

The purpose of the thesis is to review and expand the journal I kept while student teaching in kindergarten and grade one during the Fall Semester, 1992. Toward that end I have included the necessarily brief original journal entries, expanded versions of the more noteworthy entries to include additional details, comments on my feelings and reactions to the events of the day, and insights I gained from my experiences with the children. To illustrate and elaborate on journal entries I have included samples of the children's writing, worksheets, and letters to parents. The thesis concludes with a section that contrasts my teaching experiences in kindergarten with my experiences in first grade. Appended is a list of children's books I read to the first graders.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to the 18 first grade students and 60 kindergarten students without whom I would not have any memories for this thesis. They all helped make my student teaching experience a lot of fun. Thanks also to Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Sherer, and Mrs. Fletcher for their wonderful advice and support while I was doing my student teaching in their classes, and for giving me the freedom to explore ideas and teaching styles on my own. Finally, thanks to Dr. Virginia White for her advice and suggestions as I was writing my thesis and for her help in editing my work.

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Introduction

I began my student teaching in first grade and I spent ten weeks there. During that time, I got to know the teacher and each of the eighteen students individually.

There was a wide range of maturity levels in the class. Probably the most mature student was a girl named Ashley. She was very neat and capable and completed the majority of her schoolwork with ease. Mrs. Jones often joked that she could teach the class for us. Ashley was also very well-behaved and attentive during class.

In contrast to Ashley's maturity was a girl named Linda. She was very immature. Linda's vocabulary appeared limited, and she often failed to comprehend directions or the content of stories. Linda often seemed unaware that she had not understood an assignment; she showed no motivation to understand why she had made mistakes.

The rest of the students fell somewhere in between Ashley and Linda in maturity, and each one of them had his/her own, unique personality. The other students in the class were: Hilary, Mark, Matt, Erin, Brandon, Ryan G., Ryan N., Joseph, Justin, Adam, Lauren, Laiyan, Diana, Evan, Julie, and Jeff. Mark was very shy, had a poor attitude about school, and was extremely bright. Brandon was intelligent, quiet, and well-behaved. Joseph was eager to learn and very positive. Diana was very determined, talkative, and not very sure of herself. Evan was high strung, the tallest student in the class, and precocious. Erin became very emotionally attached to others, could be

easily upset, and was cheerful and fun-loving too. Julie was very cheerful, liked to point out my mistakes, and was overly helpful at times. Adam was very bright and his drawings were very advanced for someone his age. His mind also wandered frequently during class and he was slow to begin assignments. We used to say that the bell to end school woke Adam up because he became very animated after class was over for the day. Lauren liked to be the center of attention. Ryan G. was easily intimidated and reluctant to ask for help. Jeff was very helpful, conscientious, and aware of others' emotions and feelings. Laiyan was a new student from China, spoke little English, and was extremely bright, especially in math. Matt was helpful, sweet, and tried hard even though some assignments were difficult for him. Justin was cheerful and bright. Ryan N. was very neat, a perfectionist, and always tried to do his best. Hilary was talkative, friendly, usually cheerful, and could be moody at times.

Once I became aware of the students' personalities, I could predict, to some extent, how the students would react to situations and activities. I also knew whether each student would, on the average, be able to accomplish assignments with ease or would struggle with them. Of course, there were always exceptions to the rule.

Mrs. Jones, and eventually I, had the job of meeting each individual's needs during the day. Mrs. Jones was a very effective teacher. She was always prepared and very

organized. She kept order in the classroom and rarely, if ever, raised her voice. Mrs. Jones also had a sense of humor about life in general. She cared about the welfare of each and every one of her students and always put the needs of the students first. She was never too busy to listen and always seemed to know how to respond to comments the students made.

I feel I learned a lot from Mrs. Jones. She made me feel right at home from the very first day I was in her classroom and she made sure that the students saw me as an authority figure too. She never questioned any decisions I made in front of the students. Mrs. Jones was supportive without being intrusive. She made me feel capable as a teacher, and I felt at ease being in her classroom. I really admired the way that she was always so well-organized. Many a late night, I wished I had planned as far ahead as Mrs. Jones always did. She also included me in other teaching-related activities such as teacher meetings, conferences, curriculum planning meetings, and going out for lunch with the other first grade teachers.

Our classroom was on the east side of our wing of the building. We had the classroom closest to the bathrooms, and I think it took our students just as long to get to the bathroom and back as it did all the other students in our wing. Most of the available space in the classroom was used to its best advantage (see insert, page 6). Mrs. Jones did not like the desks to be in conventional rows, so the desks

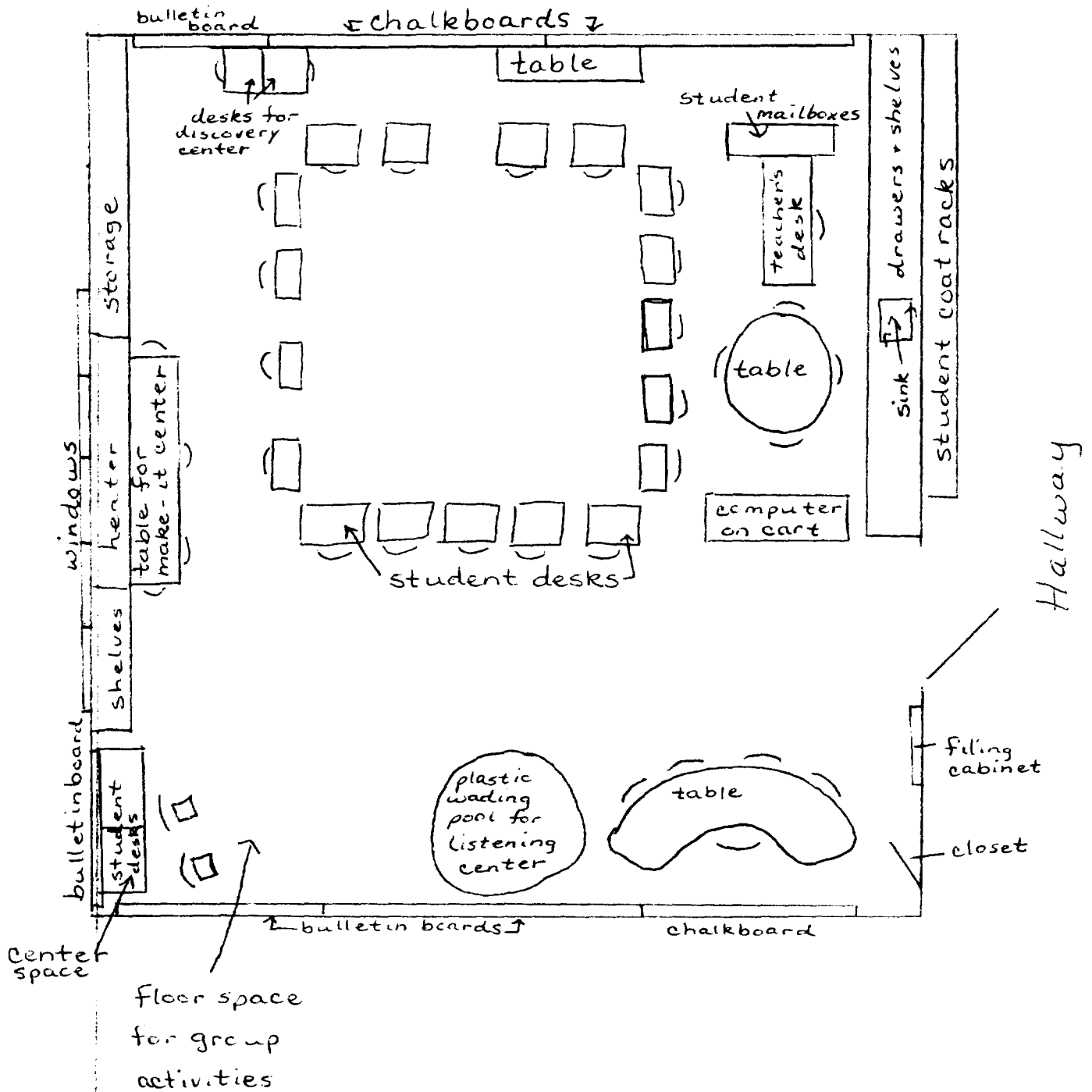
were usually in a square shape facing the front of the room. I did try to manipulate the desks into other configurations, but none seemed to work in the space we had.

The daily schedule pretty much remained the same from week to week (see insert, page 7). Specials such as music, art, and physical education, were taught at set times each week. The rest of the daily schedule was then worked out around specials, lunch, and recesses. The order of the subjects was usually consistent, but the allotted times often varied. We were rarely "on schedule." Lessons sometimes took longer than expected, and we would then have to decide whether to stop the lesson and save the finish for later or to continue the lesson and cut something else out of the day. I think I usually preferred to continue with the lesson until it was finished.

While I was student teaching in first grade, I was required to keep a daily journal of my experiences. I have included my original entries (see insert, pages 8-84) in order to document what material I began with, and also to provide a more complete picture of my teaching experience in first grade. As with any job, there were some days that stood out more than others for one reason or another, ranging from good to bad and happy to frustrating. I took the journal entries for these particular days and expanded them. I added details, my feelings, and insights I gained along the way. I also added whenever possible some examples of writing done by the students in my class. Expanding on

the more noteworthy days in my journal gave me a chance to reflect on what I had learned during my student teaching experience, and to "relive" a lot of really special moments with a really neat bunch of kids.

Front of classroom



Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:45 Opening (Every day)				192 - '93
Math Their Way Activities		(Every day)		
News				
Story (Read to class)				
9:10 Creative Writing	9:10 Creative Writing	9:10 Creative Wri.		
Reading/Lang. Arts	Reading/Lang. Arts	Reading/Lang. Arts	(DUSO)	
D.U.S.O. (will be replaced with Spelling in Dec.)	Learning Centers			
10:30 Recess	9:45 Music	10:30 Recess		
10:45 Learning Centers	10:15 Reading/Lang. Arts continues	10:45 Learning Centers		
(S.Q.U.I.R.T.)	10:50 Recess			
11:15 P.E.	11:05 Learning Centers	11:05 Weekly Reader	11:15 Music	11:05 DUSO
11:45 Recess/Lunch	11:25 DUSO	11:25 DUSO	11:45 Recess Lunch	11:25 Science, Social Studies or Health
12:45 Language	11:45 Recess/Lunch	11:45 Recess/Lunch	12:45 Language	11:45 Recess/Lunch
1:15 Science, Social Studies, or Health	12:45 Language	12:45 Language	1:15 Mathematics	12:45 Language
1:30 Mathematics	1:30 Project Charlie	1:15 Story	Their Way Math Stations	1:10 Mathematics
Their Way Math Stations	2:00 Mathematics	1:25 Science, Social Studies or Health	Completion of page in book	Their Way Math Stations
Completion of page in book	2:00 Mathematics	1:40 Mathematics	2:15 Science, Social Studies or Health	Completion of page in book
2:00 Library / Computers	3:00 Story	Their Way, Math Stations, completion of page in book	2:30 Story	2:10 Story
Finish math assignment	3:10 Evaluation, clean up, mail	2:40 Clean up, mail	2:40 Special project: Resource person, Story lady, Art mom, experiment, video, or other activity coordinated with Season or subject area.	2:20 Art
Art project	3:15 Dismissal	2:45 P.E.	3:10 Evaluation, clean-up, mail	3:05 Evaluation, Clean-up, Mail
3:00 Story		3:15 Dismissal	3:15 Dismissal	3:15 Dismissal
3:10 Evaluation of the day, clean up, mail				
3:15 Dismissal				

* Times are flexible.

Conference times M, W 7:30 to 8:00; Th 3:30 to 4:00.

Original Journal Entries
(starred entries have been expanded)

8-27-92

Today was my first official day in first grade; my first whole day actually. For the most part the day went really well. I helped individual students correct their papers and helped them write down some dictated sentences. I also oversaw cooperative learning groups and peered over shoulders as they did seatwork. I made a poster of the students' hand tracings for open house night too.

There seemed to be numerous problems with the tape recorder and I actually had one child correct another child's paper by mistake, but the day was positive overall. The students use a lot of manipulatives in math and I almost wish I could have my own book to work in at times. i

I'm looking forward to becoming more involved in the actual teaching.

note: Do all the hours we are in school count on our time sheet, or do we leave out such timeslots as lunch?

8-28-92

I read Katy No Pocket to the class today. From now on I will be reading to the class every morning. I also helped the students learn to form the letter y correctly. Some of the students have beautiful handwriting, while others try so hard but can't quite write legibly yet. We also took the students outside to mix blue and yellow food coloring into green (2 drops of each, then spritz with water) after reading the book Little Blue and Little Yellow by Leo Lionni. The food coloring was mixed on paper plates.

I feel very comfortable in the classroom and try to participate with the students as much as possible. I am also trying to learn where everything is in the room so that when I take over the class I won't have to ask Mrs. Jones where things are. I also learned that lesson plans should always be ^{done in} pencil.

Note: The schedule I sent in the mail is an approximate one for the year.

Times will vary at the beginning to accomodate the students' shorter attention spans.

8-31-92

I hope the students liven up tomorrow! They were a bunch of zombies today. Maybe because it ~~is~~ was Monday.

In addition to reading a story to the students, I also took over the news story today. It was easy to listen to the students talk about what they had done over the weekend, but I heard so much that it was hard for me to remember who said what so I could write it down. I think perhaps tomorrow I will have to do more writing as the children share their news rather than trying to remember it in a lump sum.

I find myself doing a lot of planning inside my head. Last night every time I closed my eyes I would think of something else I could do. Even in the car on the way to school I go over my plans for the day in my head.

We finally have a tape recorder that works reasonably well!



9-1-92

Today I taught the opening of the school day. I started with the pledge and worked through the months, days, and date. Then we talked about who had lost a tooth and the word for the week (considerate). We also made another mark for how many days we had come to school and put a penny in a can for each day. We also practiced counting, wrote our news story, and read a story. We also looked at a caterpillar cocoon and pictures of what it will become. I felt pretty positive of how the opening went overall. The only omission was that I forgot to take attendance, but that was quickly remedied.

The students had a tasting party for their unit on the senses. They had sour balls, salty pretzels, bittersweet chocolate, and sweet frozen popsicles.

I also joined the teachers for afternoon recess duty today.

9-2-92

Today I felt the opening went really well. I'm becoming more familiar with the routine. I read If You Give a Mouse a Cookie to the students and then they did a creative writing activity where they picked an animal and chose three things he ate or did. Then they drew pictures and shared with the class. I was pleased with their stories. Before they wrote, we brainstormed on the chalkboard. We helped with spelling if they asked.

I also taught writing. We worked on the letter e. It was harder than I thought it would be. At first when I looked over the pages I thought that I hadn't explained the letter formation very well, but after a second look I decided that most of the students did have a basic understanding of how to make the letter. Overall, I felt today was a good experience.

9-3-92

Today in writing we learned the letter S. I ~~am~~ made sure to repeat the steps over and over as I ~~show~~ wrote the letter. I checked the students' work and they all followed my directions.

The opening went smoothly. I feel comfortable with the routine and have started to add my own ideas to the basic routine.

We watched a video today and I was in charge of bringing the T.V. down to the classroom. I now know where it is kept.

I have also begun to be more involved in grading the students' papers. I ~~am~~ ~~am~~ ~~am~~ am still hesitant at times about how to mark papers and what is and is not acceptable, but the more I practice the more confident I become.

I also wrote up a homework note that will be sent home tomorrow as part of my science unit on magnets.
(see insert, page 14)



9-4-92

Homework

Please help me find a magnet to bring to school on Wednesday, September 9. I need to be able to share one way that magnets are used in my home.

9-4-92

Today I started my unit on magnets. The students were really excited about it. We took extra time to explore and find out what kinds of objects magnets would and would not pick up. All of the students seemed eager to participate. I'm looking forward to continuing my science unit on Tuesday. (see insert, pages 16-17)

One of the quietest boys in our class brought in a book to share with the class today. I read that instead of what I had planned to read. I found his extra attempt to participate very encouraging.

Magnets

Day 1 What does a magnet attract?

container for each student:

penny	hairband
plastic peg	paper clip
crayon	key
brass bolt	screw
brass nut	iron nail
stainless steel nut	washer

1. let students look at objects
2. give each student a magnet
classify objects magnetic and nonmagnetic
3. make chart as a group
4. Summary - Magnets pull things made of iron.

Homework: Bring a magnet from home.
Be able to tell one use for that magnet in your home.

Day 2 Different kinds of magnets.

1. On board put child's name, magnet, then use
Compare and contrast students' magnets
2. Show students other kinds of magnets.

Day 3 Strength of Magnets

strong
example

1. Get into cooperative groups.

Each student takes own magnet.

Each group gets one larger magnet and some paper clips.

2. Record # paper clips that can be

- hung on each magnet. - Turn in group paper.

3. Share results as a class. Day 3

Day 4 Magnetic Poles

1. Read page 116.
Show magnets with poles marked.
2. Read page 117.
Pass magnets to let students feel push
Diagram on board

S	N
N	S

 Push
3. Read page 118.
Pass magnets to let students feel pull.
Diagram on board

S	N
S	N

 Pull
4. Do p. 41 in t.E.
(see #4)

Day 5 Make a Magnet

1. Read Mickey's Magnet
2. Make a Magnet -
use large round magnet
each student: paper clip
wire nail
hold end paper clip on end magnet
try to pick up nail

Hard *
teacher
help

9-8-92

I did a lot more of the teaching today than I had been doing. Besides teaching the opening and writing I also added Charlie, which is one of their health ~~so~~ units. We talked about "put-downs" today. It was a hard thing to give examples of so that the students could relate to it, but I think I managed rather well.

I also taught math for the first time today. The students worked in pairs to toss counters and record their answers. They also practiced the concept of zero. I'm learning to be very specific when I give instructions to the students so that I get the results I intended.

I'm also learning to keep fillers in mind in case ~~of~~ one of my planned activities runs short of its allotted time.

P.S. I got engaged this weekend!

Congratulations!



9-9-92

Today we did a creative writing activity based on the book Happiness is a Warm Puppy. Each student finished the sentence "Happiness is..." and drew a picture to go with it. Then we made them into a class book entitled "Happiness is coming to first grade." Later, I read the book to the students.

We also discussed the students' Weekly ~~Red~~ Reader, which dealt with Panda Bears. The students got into their cooperative learning groups to complete a fact quiz on pandas.

In science we put everyone's magnet from home on the board with their name and a ~~some~~ way they could use their magnet at home. We also talked about other kinds of magnets. On the way back to their seats, each student found something magnetic in the classroom.

During math we worked on the numeral 6 and on before and after. The students also completed a mid-chapter review.

I taught all ~~the~~ afternoon today. It made for a long day, but I really enjoyed it.


9-10-92

Today the students seemed really lethargic in the morning. It was hard to get them focused on school. We read Old Black Fly, but the students didn't really seem interested. It was a rather frustrating start to the day.

Later the students seemed to liven up a bit. We practiced the letter (t) and listened to and discussed a story on tape.

During math we worked some on number words. I wrote the words next to the corresponding numerals on the board and the students then made the matches on their papers. Some of the students found this activity easy, and others had a lot of trouble ~~even~~ with the copying part.

Science seemed to be a big success. The students were divided into groups of 3 or 4. Each group had a magnet and ~~each~~ each group member had a magnet they had brought from home. The students were to see how many paperclips they could hang in a line from each magnet, and record their answers.

9-11-92

Today we read A Surprise Party for Dinosaur in the morning. The students really enjoyed it. They especially enjoyed trying to find dinosaur's friend green worm in all of the pictures.

We practiced the letter h in writing. The students all did a very neat job.

On the spur of the moment I decided to make a chart for the students to record the results of their group testing in science yesterday. However, it proved to be too last minute so I had to put it aside for Monday. We worked on magnetic poles in science. I let the students all feel the push and pull between two strong magnets. They really enjoyed that. A comprehension sheet showed that most of the students had learned from our experimenting. One girl had trouble but I am going to work with her individually on Monday.

Teaching all afternoon makes the day go by very quickly.

9-14-92

The students were extremely alert this morning. During news time they had so much to say that we ran out of time to do everything I had planned.

The social worker came to talk to the class and to explain what she was at the school for. Our class was very quiet throughout and didn't have any questions for her.

Before the start of class I pulled the one student who had had trouble with the science page aside. I gave her a new page and gave her manipulatives to work through the page with. She did a perfect job using the magnets and objects.

We rearranged the daily schedule to add a Madeline video and cut out language. By the end of the day we found time to add an extra math page to the schedule. The students did the second page independently.

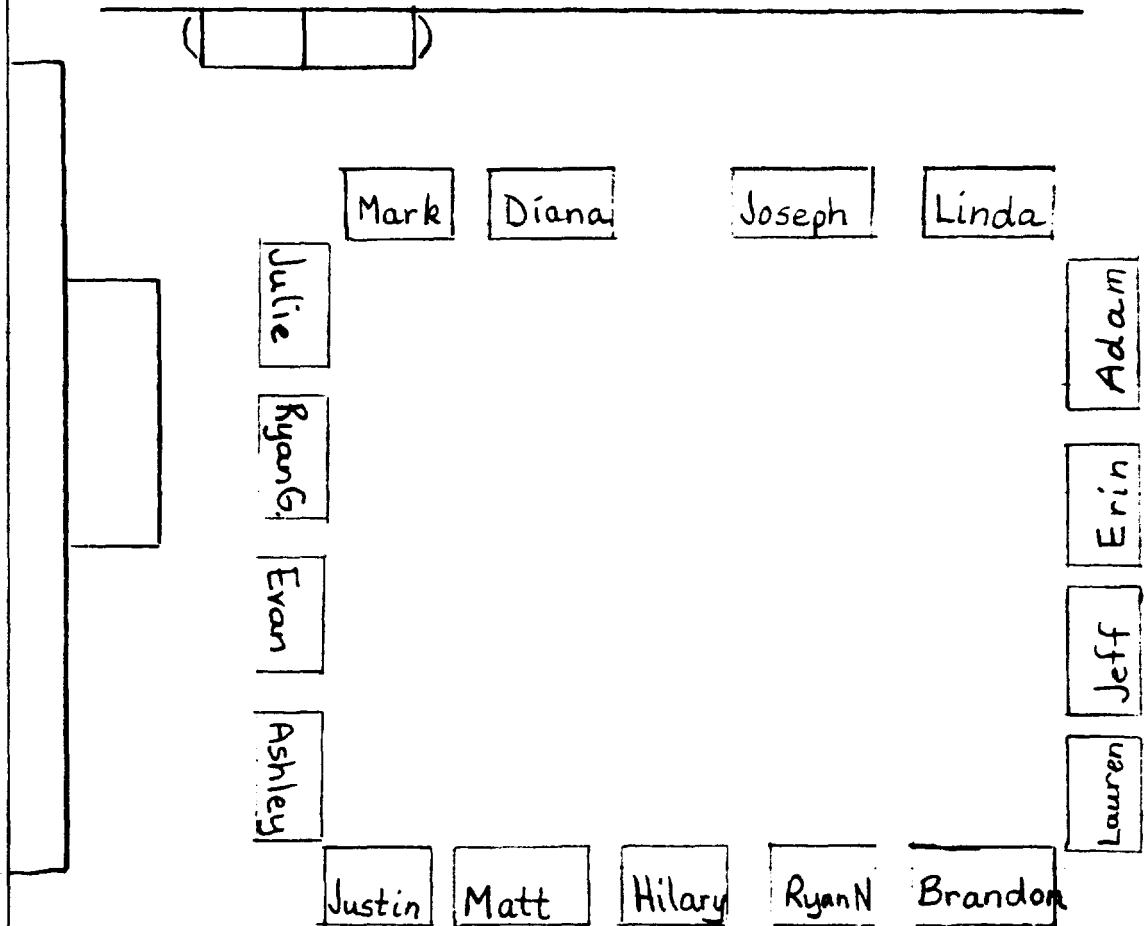
Having an hour for computers and library breaks up the class. It was a very busy hour because the students rotated every 20 min.

In science the students graphed the results of their ~~magnets~~ strength tests.

I also made a new seating chart for the students this weekend. (see insert, page 23)

New Seating Chart

9-14-92



9-15-92

Today in writing we reviewed all of the letters we have learned so far on the chalkboard. Students also practiced on individual chalkboards at their seats. We did the letter i then, and I stressed the importance of doing their best work because it was such an easy letter. They did a really nice job.

In language we worked on the naming and telling parts of sentences. For Project Charlie the students had a list of 12 items and they had to find another person in the class that fit the description. Some of the items were ~~B~~ has blue eyes and plays a musical instrument. The students had a lot of fun gathering the information.

After recess the students were so hot that I tried to go easy on them. We worked on greater than and less than. Surprisingly enough, the students had the most trouble counting the number in each set. For the touch point numeral 8, I only had the students complete 2 rows today. They all did very nice work.

We ended up the day under the fans, listening to a story.

I also sent a note home with the students asking them to bring a baby picture of themselves from home (see insert, page 25).

Sent home 7-15-92



Homework

I need to bring
a baby picture of myself.
I need the picture on
Wednesday, 9-16. The picture
will be returned in about
two weeks.

9-16-92

Today we did a creative writing activity ~~with~~ from the book A My Name is Alice. The students wrote: My name is _____ and I sell _____. ~~The~~ The students had to choose to sell something that started with the same letter as their first name started with. Then they had to draw a picture to go with their sentence. We put all their pages into a book. They all turned out really neat.

In the Weekly Reader, some of the students took advantage of an opportunity to vote for President of the United States. President Bush proved to be most popular in our class.

We started our Health unit today on How You Grow. The students got their health books today. We also did the chapter review in math.

→ (see insert, pages 27-29)

Health Unit

How You Grow Chap 3

Homework: Have students bring in a baby picture to put on a guess who board.

Poster board
Guess who
numbered
pictures
paper to guess
on
box underneath

Wed

Day 1 How You Grow

p. 30, 31

1. Describe what it means to grow.
2. Look at photos p. 30, 31 - What do they mean?

What changes do you see

3. p. 32, 33 People Grow

How are the children different on p. 32?

p. 33 - Are there some outfits that don't fit you anymore?

Name something that you can do this year that you couldn't do last year.

Thurs

Day 2

1. Read The Very Tall Little Girl

Discuss good things about being as tall as they are.

2. Measure students heights. Make a graph. Which students are the same height?

3. Read The Littlest Leaguer.

Enough
time?

Ask students why the others didn't want Harold on the team.

How did Harold save the day?

Was his size really important after all?

40-50

Fri

Day 3

1. On large butcher paper, make body outlines of each student.
Have students pair up. Trace with crayon. Put names on back.
2. Talk about what kinds of things students may want to add to their body outline to make it look like them. Such as hair color, eye color, clothes, etc.

Introduce
Guess who
poster?

Mon

Day 4

1. p. 34, 35 Hair and Nails Grow
Discuss differences in hair length and color. Discuss good hair care ideas.
2. p. 35 How do students take care of nails? Do their parents help them?
3. Allow students time to work on their body outlines.

During
Computers?

Wed

Day 5

1. p. 36, 37, 38 Teeth Grow
What do you need for a nice smile?
What do you need to chew food?
What do you need to help you speak clearly? (Teeth)
2. First sets of teeth are called baby teeth. The second set is permanent teeth.
3. Talk about good care of teeth.
brushing dentists.
4. Work on body outlines as time allows.

Day 6

Thurs
Openhouse

1. p. 39 Parts inside your body grow
Name some parts inside your body
that can't be seen from the outside.
Bones and muscles grow
- ✓ 2. Finish up body outlines.

Day 7

Fri

1. Learning as you grow

p. 40, 41, 42

Discuss what children in photos are
learning or have learned to do.

Have students name two or three things
they have learned to do for themselves.

p. 42. Why should students learn
to work and play with people?

As you get older and grow up do you
learn to get along better?

How do you know when you get along
well with others?

Mon

Day 8

p. 43

1. Share baby picture poster results.
Using a mirror have students tell
two ways they are different and two
ways they are the same.

2. p. 44 Health Highlights

3. p. 45 Chapter Review

9-17-92

Today we read a story about a class and their pet rabbit. Then the students wrote sentences to tell about pictures from the story. The students also did the Chapter test in math.

In Health, we read a book about The Very Tall Little Girl and the students discussed good things about being as tall as they are. I made a graph of the heights of all the students. They really seemed to enjoy seeing how they measured up against each other.

At the end of the day the students watched a Clifford video.



9-18-92

This morning I read a book called Monty to the students. It was harder to read than I had anticipated because it is written with speech bubbles. There isn't really any text to the book. I resorted to fabricating text in order to help the students comprehend the plot of the story. As choppy as it was, I think the students enjoyed the story anyway.

We took the posttest for Chapter 1 in math today. The students did very well overall.

In health the students made outlines of their bodies on butcher paper. I set rules carefully to prevent utter chaos. The students really enjoyed themselves! I also introduced a Guess Who? poster ~~to~~ to the class which ~~are~~ consists of a baby picture of everyone including Mrs. Jones and myself. I also impressed upon the students how important it was to keep which picture was of them a secret. I also took the time to read a book called The Littlest Leaguer to the students. It is about the shortest boy on a baseball team who saves the day. I was excited that all of the students paid attention to this book.

9-21-92

Today in math I got out calculators for the students to experiment with. There is also a special overhead calculator for us to use. The students really enjoy using the calculators.

In health we discussed the growth and care of the students' hair and nails. They discussed differences in each other's hair and how they take care of their hair and nails.

During computer and library time the students worked on their body outlines. We are trying to get them ready for open house on Thursday.

This evening, after school, I went to the I.R.A. banquet and meeting. I am a student member of I.R.A. The speaker was wonderful! She ~~talked~~ ~~about~~ told numerous stories and talked about using songs to encourage students to make books. She showed many examples of books made by students using songs or based on their interests.

9-22-92

Today I spent the morning observing at Liberty Elementary. I chose this school because it is an open concept school. I observed in second grade. All four second grade classes are in the same room and the teachers team teach to an extent. The classes are separated by mobile dividers to an extent. I was surprised that the noise level was so low. I had expected the background noise level to be higher.

In language we began working on writing a class experience story. The students picked their celebration of Clifford's birthday as the topic they wanted to write about. They also made a list of five details ~~that~~ about the celebration that they wanted to write about. (see insert, page 34)

During Project Charlie the students talked about being someone special. I had each of them come up to see something special that I had in a box. Inside was a mirror, so each student saw themselves.

Clifford

Saw a movie

made Clifford
faces

celebrated
birthday
Sept. 5

red dog - biggest

dot to dot

9-23-92

Today in creative writing we wrote based on the book Can I keep Him? by Steven Kellogg. The students each wrote about something they had found and then told why they couldn't keep them. Their ~~the~~ reasons all turned out cute. The students are becoming more comfortable with sounding out words and spelling as best as they can.

In language the students wrote a story about Clifford's Birthday using the list of details they made yesterday. I was a little disappointed that I didn't have more students offering ideas for the story. Some became more involved with the others. I copied the story onto chart paper to hang up for open house tomorrow night. → (see insert page 36)

We started addition in math today by adding 1 more. The students also continued work on their body outlines.

After school I sat in on a curriculum planning meeting for first grade. I understood the discussion easily. It's something I think I'd like to take part in some day.

Clifford's Birthday

Clifford is the biggest red dog in the universe! Clifford's birthday is on September 5th. Clifford's birthday is on the same day as Matt's.

We made Clifford's face out of paper. We did a dot to dot of Clifford. Clifford came over to our room. We watched a movie about Clifford. Clifford watched the movie with us.

9-24-92

Today in language the students drew a picture of a pet they would like to have. Then they wrote a sentence telling one way that they would take care of their pet.

Math started out very well, but turned out to be very frustrating. The first two pages we did were ~~very~~ relatively easy for the students. They had to write the sums for addition sentences on one page and on the next they had to write addition sentences. The third page got to be very confusing because it was trying to teach the commutative property using colors. The students understood how to add to find the answer but they became very confused when it came to keeping the colors and numbers straight. For example, in $4+2=6$ and $2+4=6$, the four squares in each problem were to be blue and the 2 squares red. The end of math was rather disheartening.

After recess we ~~can~~ read and had some discussion about growing and learning in health.

Open house was tonight. It went very well. We took the bodies the students had been working on in health and propped them up around the room. The whole evening had a rather festive air and it was nice to meet the parents of my students. It did make for a long day though.

9-25-92

My main goal for today was to help my students gain some comprehension of the commutative property. We played a game called "what do you see" where they worked with partners. I would tell them how many ~~and~~ red + blue unifix cubes to put on a divided paper plate. Then the students would tell me a number sentence and a sum. They would then rotate the paper plate 180° and tell me the new number sentence. We then discussed that, while the sums were the same, the addends were in a different order. I felt very positive at the end of the lesson that the students had grasped the concept.

In health we talked about how we learn as we grow. The students discussed things they were learning or had learned to do.

We also cut and ate apples in celebration of Johnny Appleseed's birthday.

9-28-92

Today the students did the mid-chapter review on their own before opening. They really did a nice job for doing independent work. Most mistakes were just careless errors.

In math we worked on different ways to make the sums of 2, 3, and 4. We played a game called "Tilt the Bowl" where students put some blocks on top of a margarine tub and hid some under it to show different ways of making the same sum. Many of the students did very well, but some were confused. We also checked for conservation of number today.

After math the afternoon kind of got away from me. The students finished a page about themselves in health. They were to tell their hair color, their age, and then use their height graph to find someone taller and smaller than them. They made covers for their stories too.

After that it was time for computers and library. The students did writing on their own today, but I don't think they did as nice a job as when we work together as a class.

I have been trying to let the students do more independent work, but I think I need to back track a little and focus on neatness some more.

9-29-92

Today the students made owls to hang on an October bulletin board. The morning began to fall apart after that. During morning opening the students were talkative and uncooperative. When I warned them that if they didn't quiet down they would miss opening, they responded that they didn't care. So I sent them back to their seats and Mrs. Jones promptly started reading. I was kind of discouraged and a little upset that they would so openly defy me, but I will talk to them tomorrow morning about it.

There is also a little girl in the class who talks out a lot and constantly points out errors I may have made. I feel I need to be more firm with her and try to focus her attention on her lessons.

I finished my health unit today. The students revealed their baby pictures and we talked about how they have changed and how they are still the same as when they were babies.



9-30-92

Today in creative writing the students wrote about Johnny Applesseed. I focused on starting a sentence with a capital letter, making it make sense, and having it end with a period.

During Project Charlie everyone is interviewing a friend in the class. Today they drew their friend's picture and wrote their name.

We worked on vertical addition in math. Everyone seemed to grasp the ~~concep~~ concept.

Since today is the last day of September, there was a lot to change for October. The calendar, a new set of seasonal books, a new author of the month, and Halloween ideas to think of. Since Tomie de Paola is my favorite author and illustrator, I brought in a background board ~~g~~ showing examples of his illustrations. October promises to be a busy month.

I also had a talk with the class before morning opening. I told them what behaviors I expected and why and what the consequence would be for misbehavior. They were very well behaved ~~after~~ after that.

10-1-92

First thing this morning the students made bats and ghosts for October. They left one at school to hang from the ceiling and took the other one home. They turned out really cute and the kids were excited.

I also introduced Tomie de Paola. The kids were excited about him too. They liked ~~to~~ recognizing his illustrations from ~~to~~ books they had heard. I also went through the October books and showed them what was there.

I took reading today for the first time. It was hard and I felt kind of awkward at first, but I'm sure it will get easier and go more smoothly with practice. I now have the whole day that I am teaching. It makes the day go much faster!

We also started working on story problems in math. Most students grasped this quickly. I tried to stress answering with how many of what they were talking about. They also wrote their own story problems in bear bunches.

Note: The students love Waldo books.

10-2-92

At last it's Friday! I feel a little more together as this week is ending. I have all of my plans ready for next week. It's going to be very busy because it's Fire Prevention Week.

I'm getting more comfortable with reading, but I'm still trying to get the rhythm down. We played around the world to practice all of their vocabulary words. The students really enjoyed this!

We started new centers today. There is a Tomie de Paola book in the listening center. They are working on word order in sentences at the writing center, and they have to show ways to make the sum of 6 at the math center. Other centers are smelling jars, matching numbers and number words, computers, eggs, make-it, and games.

In math we're reviewing for the chapter 2 test on Monday.



10-5-92

This week promises to be busy. I'm striving to be more organized and more prepared to begin each day. I find it helps to write ~~my~~ notes to myself.

We watched a Snuffy Fire Prevention Film this morning. The kids all enjoyed it. The vocabulary word for the week is "prevention" so it corresponds nicely.

I'm feeling more comfortable with reading now. I'm learning to discuss each new story thoroughly.

The students made fire hats today and could wear them all afternoon as long as they were not a distraction.

The students took their post test in math today for Chapter 2. Most of them did very well with perfect papers or only one mistake. Only a few have not quite mastered addition. ~~with~~ These students still need manipulatives or pictures to count from.

We also introduced the police and fire numbers today. The students practice these at home and they get to add a badge to their desks as they learn them.

I also made a new seating chart this weekend to try and get some students who are struggling up near the front.

10-6-92

Today we started evaluating the students on their lower case letter formation. It took a couple of attempts before I decided that it's easier to sit on the left side of or in front of a student who is right-handed. It's easier to watch them write from those positions.

In math we did a beginning story problem ^{page} and took grades. Most students, at this point, have a basic understanding of story problems. At this point we are still reading the problems to them.

The fireman came to visit today. There was a mix-up at the fire station and the man who was supposed to come and speak to the children had taken a day off. So instead, the fire chief came out to do the presentation. He did a wonderful job, and the kids really enjoyed him.

We also did a Project Charlie activity where students talked about things they liked and didn't like to do.



10-7-92

We finished evaluating the students' lower case formation this morning.

Reading is going well this week. I am starting to feel that I have the hang of it. Now that I know what to do, I am enjoying teaching reading.

We started capital letters in writing today with the letter "C." I ~~am~~ anticipate that the capital letters will be hard for some and easier than others.

The art mom came today. She will come once a month to introduce a new painting to the students. This week she brought a tiger painting by a Japanese artist. She also shared some other Japanese art forms with the students. The students ended the lesson by drawing a picture of a tiger. Each student will have a folder to keep their drawings in until the end of the year.

The students also wrote a thank-you letter to the fireman. They dictated to me as I wrote on the board. They had a lot to say, and everyone participated. We will mail the letter off tomorrow after everyone signs their name.

(see insert page 47)

After school I went to my second First Grade Feedback Committee Meeting. So far the discussions have covered first grade entry level skills for

reading, handwriting, and general entry level skills. The committee is also discussing what the average first grader could be expected to know after 9 weeks of school. Discussion is very detailed and specific. Hopefully some positive ideas will be the result.

10-7-92

Dear Fireman Phil,

Thank you for coming to visit us. Thank you for the phone books. Please come again.

Thank you for letting us try on the oxygen mask. Thank you for showing us how you dress up in fire clothes. We remember that your clothes are made out of nomex.

Thank you for showing us how to stop, drop, and roll. Thank you for showing us how to be safe. We liked your visit. We like it that you have beepers to keep the firemen safe. We liked to see Miss Woodruff dressed up in fire clothes.

Thank you,
Mrs. Jones' and Miss Taylor's
first grade class
Cooks Corners



10-8-92

Today we started another story in reading. After the students read the story, I reviewed it out loud with them. During today's lesson I also focused on critical thinking. I tried to make the students aware of why an answer was right.

We started time tests in math today. Most students finished earlier than the 1 min. 50 sec. we allowed. Right now they are only working on addition facts up to 5. We also started subtraction to 6 today. I played a whale game with the students to help them switch from addition to subtraction. They really enjoyed it. The beginning pages of the lesson are very easy and the students moved through them easily.

We have also been working on learning the fire and police numbers, stop, drop, and roll, and the students' own phone numbers and addresses for fire prevention week. They have sheets taped to their desks and they get to color and glue on badges as they know each requirement. The students really enjoy this activity.

10-9-92

We had another time test in math today with only 1 min. 30 sec. for it. Most students are still doing very well. We will take one every day at the beginning of math. We also talked about ~~the~~ subtracting zero.

The students were very wound up after lunch today. It was hard to get them to settle down and focus on what we were doing.

We finished up with fire prevention today and students who had learned all of the information on their sheets got to take them home with a sticker.

We're working on word order in sentences in language. Right now the students mainly listen to the words and try to arrange them in their heads because the words are too hard for them to read. They also get extra practice copying from their books or the board. They need a lot of practice so this is beneficial to them.

10-12-92

Today is Columbus day so we ~~are~~ ^{spent} some time on who ~~is~~ Columbus is and why he is important. After hearing a story about Columbus, students were asked to write about Columbus.

In reading we started a new story. I am trying to focus the students attention on picture clues and details. ~~I also try to~~ I am also trying to get the students to support answers they give me as much as possible. I want my students to know the right answers, but I also want them to know why their answers are right and I want them to be able to support any answer they give me.

In math we worked on deciphering story problems. This is to help students learn whether they need to add or subtract in order to answer a story problem. Today I focused the students' attention on using picture clues.

The students also saw a video about Columbus this morning.



10-13-92

(see
insert
page 52)

Today was the first day of my food unit. On Friday I sent a note home telling parents we would be having a tasting party today if their ~~the~~ child would like to share a favorite snack or finger food. 10 out of 17 children brought a snack to share. There were a lot of sweet, sugary foods so we tried to space these with the nutritious foods. Chocolate chip cookies were the most prominent item. Next time it might be advisable to make the suggestion of a healthy snack. We had so much food that we split it up and had two tasting parties. The children really enjoyed this.

I sent thank-you notes to the children who had participated. The rest of my day was spent at our luncheon. I did have a good time there, too. It was nice to get to talk to everyone!

Social Studies: Food

Tues 10-13 Food tasting party

Students bring favorite snack or food for class to sample.

Wed. 10-14 Poem about food T.E. p.30
 a. write ^{in book form} on ~~chart~~ paper - underline words that will get a picture
 b. children draw illustrations to go with poem
 c. children learn rebus poem

Thurs 10-15 Plant corn plants
 Need: Milk cartons - Lch
 potting soil - DAD
 corn seeds -

Read The Corn Dancers S.E. p.32-37
 vocab: staple food - part of most meals
 rice, corn
 potatoes, pasta
 beans, lettuce

~~Fri~~
~~10-16~~
 Mon
 10-19

Read Bread and Jam for Frances

paint bread pictures
 toast bread
 spread with jam and eat

Need: bread
 knives, jam
 paint brushes
 food coloring
 milk?
 toaster

wed 10-21 9AM Field Trip to Eagle Grocery Store
 (w/ Shirley's class)

Need:
 parent volunteer

10-14-92

Creative writing was by far the highlight of the day today. The students have a couple of favorite books that I've read over and over. One is ~~The Hip~~ The Hippopotamus Ate Our Teacher and the other is The Teacher from the Black Lagoon. Both books have a teacher named Jones somewhere in them and the students get a big kick out of this.

I read them both stories and then told them to write a teacher story of their own. The only stipulation was that their story could not have a hippo in it. The students really got into writing their stories and making pictures. They spent the whole morning on this, except for a brief break to have their pictures taken. One girl wrote $1\frac{1}{2}$ pages! They all really had a good time. Some found this very easy. Others struggled, but I encouraged them to keep broadening their stories. The minimum requirement was two sentences.

Making corrections such as allowing for periods & capital letters are best done in black ink. Writing a word ~~at~~ above the students attempt is best done in pencil.

The rest of the day was spent making up what we didn't do because of creative writing.

10-15-92

Today we worked on the vowel y in reading. We also talked about multiple word meanings.

In Social Studies we read ~~the~~ The Corn Dancers and talked about staple foods. We also planted lima beans. I hope they grow. (Note: The best time to purchase corn seeds is in March.)

We also read our Weekly Reader today. The highlight was a letter from Buddy Bear Good Citizen. He always writes a letter to the boys and girls about a problem or a situation. Then he asks a question that students can answer and discuss. One of my students asked if they could write back to Buddy. Five students chose to do so. I sent their letters into Weekly Reader. Hopefully, we will get a response back.

Today was the first time in math that the book mixed addition and subtraction problems on the same page. I stressed to the students how important it would be to watch their signs.

10-16-92

Today the story in reading consisted of directions on how to make a bookmark. So the students read their story and then got paper, scissors, and glue to make their own bookmarks. Tonight I am taking their bookmarks home to put contact paper on them to make them more durable.

Math seemed impossible today! For the lesson, the students were asked to tell which question would go with each story problem. My first task was to teach the phrases in all and are left. ~~my~~ My next task was to teach the children to associate the questions with addition or subtraction since the page was a mixture of both. I was so intent on achieving some understanding on the part of my students that I forgot to stop in time for us to do bread painting in social studies. Fortunately, I had not forewarned the students about the activity so ~~so~~ they were not disappointed.

10-19-92

Today we finished our workbook in reading. We will be getting ready to take our reading test soon.

We got a new student today. Her name is ~~Hay~~ Laiyan Chan and she is Chinese. She speaks no English. She was in second grade, but to facilitate her ~~see~~ learning English it was felt that she would be better off in first. She is very bright in math. Her ~~interpreter~~ interpreter came with her for a few hours. After that we were on our own. Mrs. Jones stayed in the room with her. Math seemed to be the best part of her day.

In social studies we got to our bread painting. We mixed food coloring in milk and the students painted on slices of white bread. Then we toasted the bread. I was surprised at how well the food coloring showed up even after the bread was toasted. Since we had read Bread and Jam for Frances, the students could ~~choose~~ choose to spread grape or strawberry jam on their toast. I overestimated the amount of jam I would need and we ended up with a lot left over. First graders are not very good at using a knife to spread either.

In math we tackled story problem questions again. I gave each student a help sheet of two balloons. One had the question How many in all? and a plus sign on it and the other had the question How many are left? and a minus sign on it. I was pleased that most students seemed to have an easier time understanding the story problems today than they did on Friday. Even Kaiyan grasped the idea quickly.

10-20-92

During reading we reviewed words for the test tomorrow. The students' favorite game is around the world. We played that and spin the bottle to practice. Kaiyan participated and even read a few words.

We spent a lot of time on math today. This is to Kaiyan's benefit because she excels in math. She is very bright and is quick to pick up on activities by watching the other children. §

First we went outside to play Hopscotch. I put subtraction problems in the squares. Each student had to answer the problem before moving the the square to retrieve the game piece. We also worked some more on story ~~problems~~ problems and reviewed for the chapter posttest tomorrow. The students also tried their hand at adding and subtracting rows of 5 numbers. Most did a good job, although some students had trouble tracking where they were in the row of numbers.



10-21-92

Today was our field trip to Eagle grocery store. We went with another first grade class. The tour went very well. The students were very well behaved. The tour took them through the bakery, the meat cutting room, the freezers, and past the box crusher. There were also doughnuts provided for the kids.

After the tour was over, we broke the students into groups with a parent and the students went "shopping for sounds." They had to find things on the ~~also~~ shelves that started with the sounds for the letters of the alphabet.

When we returned to school we talked about our trip and wrote a thank you note to the store. The class dictated the note to me and I wrote it on the board.

After lunch the students watched a Halloween safety video. They also took the reading test for Yellow Fish Blue Fish and a test for Chap. 3 in Math.

The reading test seems to me to be very simplistic because the whole test is read to the students.

We also had a meeting to schedule conferences this morning.

It appeared to me to be chaos, but the teachers all got their students slotted. They have to be careful to schedule brothers and sisters one after the other and not at the same time.

Note: I was in charge of planning and arranging the field trip.

10-23-92

Today I went to a workshop on problem solving in math. The speaker was excellent and she was very enthusiastic. She talked about taking the "dinky" story problems from the book and having the students, as a class, list the knowns, unknowns, and restrictions. Then they get into groups and solve the problem.

She also suggested that we could take a story problem and switch the knowns for the unknowns, drop one or more restrictions, and change the implied domain. It's really interesting to see the results of such changes. The story problems instantly become more challenging.

The speaker suggested doing one story problem with the class every day. The story is read, ~~then~~ the data is analyzed, and the planning is done as a class. In small groups the answer is estimated and the problem is solved. The class then gets back together to examine the answer and the methods used to solve the problem.



10-27-92

Buddy Bear from Weekly Reader wrote back! I shared his return letter with the class and they are very enthusiastic. They want to write back to him again. The kids who wrote to him last time all wanted a copy of Buddy's letter. I'll get those for them tomorrow.

We started a new chapter in math today as well as ~~take~~ took the cumulative review for chapters 1-3. In the new chapter the book introduces the number line for counting on. I taped number lines to each student's back and someone stood behind them to "borrow" their number line. The students really enjoyed this activity.

The hardest part of reading was a skill page on quotation marks. Trying to explain the difference between what would be spoken and what they read is a hard concept for most first graders to master. We didn't get finished with this page today and we will most likely have to talk it through tomorrow.

There was another curriculum meeting tonight after school. ~~It~~ It was kind of tedious and frustrating because a lot of what had been done

previously was undone because
people had changed their minds.



10-28-92

Lainan rode the bus for the first time to school today. She was also the helper for the day along with another student. She counted lunchboxes, put up calendar pieces, led the line, and passed out papers. She is really just like one of the kids now. She is learning fast in reading. Even though she knows a lot of words, she does not comprehend ~~so~~ all that she reads yet. She is one of the top students in math. She also smiles and laughs a lot more now.

We read The Grumpy Ladybug by Eric Carle this morning. One of the students brought it in to share with the class. The class really enjoyed it. They got in to acting it out. After I read the story, I gave the students writing paper and they wrote and drew pictures about the book. Many of the students are beginning to write more. Their inventive spellings are becoming more accurate and legible. Some students, however, are still very preoccupied with spelling words right or having the correct letter to go with a sound.

A lot of students in our class seem to have trouble with the short *a* and *i* sounds. It's a challenge helping them to hear the differences.

We also did a page that had sentences ~~and~~ with blanks in them. There were choices of words to use in the blanks. The words were the new vocab. from reading today. I read the first three sentences to the class, but since this is really easy for them when I read it out loud I had them do the last 4 on their own. Two boys burst into tears over this. Then I felt really bad because I had encouraged them to do the page on their own. It ~~is~~ kind of irritates me that they dry their eyes and are back to normal so quickly and yet their outbursts stay on my mind for a while.

First graders are so funny. They burst into tears so quickly over what seems to me to be such mundane things sometimes. They also recover so quickly. Resiliency of youth I guess!